



## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

April 10, 2008

**TO:** Historic Preservation Commission

**FROM:** Jeffrey Winstel, AICP, Historic Preservation Planner

**SUBJECT:** Evaluation of Significance to Rockville of 19 and 20 West Montgomery Avenue

**DESCRIPTION:** Rockville Town Center, Block 4 Subdivision Lot P21

**OWNER:** 18 West Montgomery Avenue, L.L.C.  
c/o Joey Soleiman  
112 Esworthy Place  
North Potomac, MD 20878

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Based on an assessment of the history and architecture of the site, Staff finds that this property does meet the adopted Rockville criteria for a local historic district. The period of significance recommended is from the construction date of 1890 to end of Burbank's restaurant in 2003. The property qualifies under City of Rockville Criterion Historical and Cultural significance, having character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City.

### Architectural Character

The two-part, painted brick front 1 ½ story commercial structure located at 18-20 West Montgomery Avenue is the oldest downtown Rockville commercial structure in its original location. Built in 1890, the structure predates the 1895 Wire Hardware Store. The 1873 B&O Station, the oldest commercial structure in Rockville, has been relocated.



Façade and East Elevation

The building's façade abuts the sidewalk and consists of end and middle piers defining the two sections. The piers project from the wall plane a depth of one brick and the middle pier is roughly double the width of the end piers. There is no cornice line at the roof-wall junction other than that created by thin metal flashing.

The east bay of the façade is characterized by tripartite fenestration (– w-d-w-) topped by three transoms. The central double door is a recent replacement. The brick piers that separate the windows and door openings are stacked stretcher bricks that do not follow the overall course pattern of the brick façade. These piers may be only facing material. A metal I-beam is the lintel of the openings. The windows have stone sills and the door threshold is also stone.



18 West Montgomery Avenue, façade detail

The West Bay of the façade is characterized by a two-thirds height brick infill that builds out the façade so that it is flush with the piers. Bricks used for this infill wall are more textured than the other façade bricks. An additional brick type was used to patch previous window openings on the west façade bay. The top or cornice line of the infill consists of a brick header row. The only transom is above the door and it is ½ the height of the east bay transoms. The west bay window openings are approximately half the size of the east bay windows. These windows are boarded over, but their slightly projecting brick header sills are evident. The painted metal double doors appear to be recent retail stock items. The brick wall above the infill contains numerous pieces of hardware that likely supported a variety of different signs.



West bay of facade



West elevation with German Siding,  
November 2007



East elevation

The west elevation of the building is completely covered with recent vinyl siding. A photograph taken before the repair of the west elevation's vinyl siding indicates wood German siding underneath. The east elevation is faced with stucco. The three vinyl windows have been recently installed and are trimmed with wide painted wood surrounds.

The rear elevation is characterized by an addition on the rear of the west bay that has a shed roof sloping south. The slope for the roof addition is steeper than the slope for the main roof, making a noticeable break in the roofline. The west bay of the rear addition is clad with the same vinyl as the building's west elevation. Two 1/1-sash, off-center windows are located toward the west side and an air conditioning unit projects out from the space between the windows. The foundation is cement parging over brick.

The rear of the east bay has recently been altered by an incomplete construction project. The east half of the rear elevation is recessed back from the west rear addition. Two 1/1-sash windows and a rear door pierce the wall. The pre-construction photo on the left indicates the door was fronted by a stoop with side stairs supported by cement block piers. A shed roof was located above the windows about 2' below the roof and is supported by two posts on the stoop.



Rear elevation, November 2007



Rear elevation, current

A rear cellar entry is cut into the foundation. The walls of this section of the elevation are covered with stucco.

The recent construction project has resulted in the removal of the shed roof, stairs, and stoop. A platform is built out at the door level and extends out to the rear wall plane of the west bay rear elevation. A cement block foundation has been laid under the perimeter of the platform and the back wall has been framed out. The windows have been replaced with 1/1 vinyl with wide plain board surrounds, similar to those found on the east elevation.

Available Sanborn Maps suggest several aspects of the building have changed over time, including the height, width, rear additions, porches and the nature of the shared wall between 18 and 20 West Montgomery Street. The brick façade appears to have been added sometime between 1924 and 1949. Also during this time period the west bay was widened from 16' to approximately 20', the east bay's rear extension was filled in and the interior partition wall changed to a structural wall. The changing height of the building over time is hard to verify; there is no visible exterior evidence to suggest changes in height.

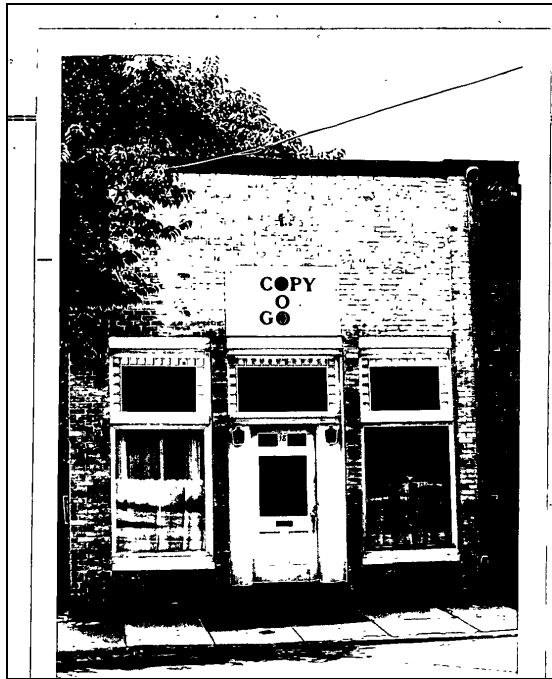
#### Physical characteristics of building identified on Sanborn fire Insurance Maps

Year	1897	1903	1908	1915	1924	1949	1960
<b>Feature</b>							
<b>Use</b>	General Store	Vacant Store	Vacant Store	Meats/ Plumber	Store	Store	Store/ Office
<b>Stories</b>	One	One and one-half	One and one-half	One and one-half	Two	One	One
<b>Additions</b>	Rear	Rear	Rear	Rear	Rear	None	East Bay porch
<b>Chimney</b>	Iron pipe	Iron pipes	Iron pipes	Iron pipes	Iron pipe and vertical steam chimney	Iron Pipe	Iron pipe and vertical steam chimney
<b>Shared Wall</b>	Interior partition	Structural wall	Structural wall	Structural wall	Interior partition	Structural wall	Structural wall
<b>W. Bay width</b>	16'	16'	16'	16'	16'	20'	20'
<b>E. Bay Width</b>	16'	16'	16'	16'	16'	16'	16'
<b>Other</b>	East bay 1/2 depth of west bay	East bay 1/2 depth of west bay	East bay 1/2 depth of west bay	East bay 1/2 depth of west bay	East bay rear extension and porch	Veneered Brick façade, east bay rear extension widened	

Based on the current physical appearance and finishes of the building, the building's predominate exterior physical character dates from between 1924 and 1949. However, the massing, height, setback, location and roof shape are very consistent with late nineteenth and early twentieth century structures found in Rockville's commercial district.

A 1976 city of Rockville Historic Building Inventory form contains a picture of the east bay of Burbanks, which was a "Copy to Go" store at the time. The image is from a scanned file and is not very clear. The Dentil Row moldings lining the inside of transom windows were probably

contemporary trim applications. The eastern window appears by divided into four rectangular lights, which could have dated from the building's original construction. The top of the building has a dark band across it, which could be a former cornice element, or only paint. The small part of the west bay in the photo is much darker, suggesting the brick façade was painted two different colors.



1976 from inventory form

Rockville historic buildings and districts and survey form, 1976

18 West Montgomery Avenue

## Cultural and Social Significance

In 1891 Rockville's first documented building permit was issued for the construction of the Dawson Store. In 1889 Thomas Dawson was appointed Postmaster by President Benjamin Harrison and operated Rockville's post office out of the general store, after its construction. Residents likely picked up the mail at their post office, and usually purchased goods at the same time. The general store was often the social hub of small rural communities like Rockville and being appointed Postmaster of a community was typically a political favor, for obvious business reasons. The National Register Bulletin #13 (How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices) notes that improved postal services such as Rural Free Delivery (1896) drastically reduced the number of post offices in small communities, "in which commercial establishments had sometimes been supported by necessary periodic visits of rural citizens to pick up mail".

In 1894 Thomas Dawson was admitted to the bar and began his law practice, leasing out the store. Thomas Dawson died in 1924, but the family retained ownership of the property until 1933. Buell and Margaret Gardner acquired the property in 1935 and retained ownership until 1969. In the 1960s, Perry and Eleanor Burbank operated Burbank's Luncheonette out of 20

West Montgomery Avenue. In 1970 Hence Maynard acquired the Luncheonette and retained the name of Burbanks, The Maynard family operated Burbanks from 1970 to 2003, when the business was closed.



Burbanks, 1985

In 2003, a fire was set in #18 to cover up a homicide of Mrs. Vanessa Sosin, the owner of the In Style Consignment Shop. At that time the Maynards closed down the restaurant and sold the building to 18 West Montgomery Avenue, LLC.

The 1986 Historic Resources Management Plan for the City of Rockville identifies the subject property with Historic Context #6 Rockville: Maturation and Expansion of the County Seat, 1893 – 1931 The Building Phase, Theme 3: Economics. The document notes the growing number of small businesses clustered around the Courthouse continued to grow and expand toward the railroad. Businesses were housed in 1-3 story frame or brick structures in a variety of architectural styles. The plan identifies Burbank's Grill/ Shoe Repair Shop as associated with this context and states it is potentially threatened by redevelopment of the Town Center.

**Archeological resources: Low potential**

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE  
HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION CRITERIA**

**18-20 West Montgomery Avenue**

Standing structures and sites, including archeological sites, must be determined to be significant in one or more of the following criteria to be found eligible for designation:

**I. Historical and cultural significance:**

- A. Is the site of a significant historic event.

*No, this is not the site of a significant event.*

- B. Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society.

*Although associated with Thomas Dawson, a prominent local lawyer and active member of the community, the existing building does not resemble the building during his years of association with the structure. In addition, Thomas Dawson was more noted for his legal career than his career as a local merchant.*

- C. Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities. (Refer to Rockville Context in Management Plan)

*The property is associated with Historic Context #6, "Maturation and Expansion of the County Seat" in the 1986 Management Plan and is identified in the Plan as a historic resource #92 in Planning Area #1.*

- D. Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, County, State, or Nation.

*The building is a rare surviving example of the commercial structures that characterized downtown Rockville prior to the Urban Renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s. It is associated with the town's late nineteenth century period of growth.*

**II. Architectural and design significance:**

- A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

*The house represents a small vernacular commercial structure of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century/early 20<sup>th</sup> century through its massing, size, storefront arrangement of the east bay, and sidewalk building line.*

- B. Represents the work of a master.

*No.*

C. Possesses high artistic values.

*No.*

D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

*This applies to multi-site historic districts, and is not applicable in this case.*

E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

*Yes, the building has retained a commercial function for most of its 100 plus years in Rockville and has become a familiar visual feature on the transition zone between the central business district and the west end residential district.*

### **III. Structural Integrity:**

"Substantially Altered" (basic shape, original façade plan, windows and doors have been obscured or changed.)

*Yes, the building has its integrity of location, setting, massing and roof profile, along with half of its original façade fenestration pattern. German siding is apparent under the west elevation's vinyl cladding.*

Minor alterations (porch removal or enclosure, roof material replacement, siding added over old siding, basic mass and fenestration intact.

Original or near original condition (all changes reversible)

Outbuildings present and recognizable

*None.*

Original site and setting largely preserved. (Lot size, environmental character, trees, setbacks, streetscape)

*Yes.*

**If the site is found to meet one or more criteria and possesses sufficient integrity, it is eligible to be recommended to the Mayor and Council as a potential historic district or landmark site. Determine the level of site significance and list the applicable criteria for the recommendation.**



**IV. Level of site significance:** (Check those that apply)

Local: *Yes*

State: *No*

National: *No*